

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF AQUATIC INVASIVE HITCHHIKERS!

Aquatic invasive species such as Eurasian water milfoil, zebra mussels and rusty crayfish have major negative impacts on the waters of Wisconsin:

Ecological impacts - Invasive species have the ability to change aquatic systems and the plants and animals that live in them. Plants like Eurasian water-milfoil form dense mats that shade out the native plant species. Zebra mussels encrust the shells of our native mussels, making it difficult for them to survive. These invasive mussels also consume the tiny plants and animals that young fish rely on for food.

Economic impacts - The costs to control invasives are extremely high. Individual lakes may spend tens of thousands of dollars per year to simply manage (not eradicate) invasive plant populations. Power plants and industries spend millions of dollars combating the zebra mussels that clog their water intakes. The Great Lakes support a more than \$4 billion fishing industry that is also threatened by current and future invasives.

Recreational impacts - Invasive species have the ability to harm native sport fish populations - the decimation of lake trout populations by sea lamprey is a good example. Invasive plants often form dense mats that make boating, fishing, and swimming difficult. Zebra mussels encrust piers, lift stations, and boats, sometimes leading to costly repairs. Their sharp shells also cut the feet of unsuspecting swimmers.

Aquatic invasive species often hitch rides to new waterbodies on the boats, trailers, and equipment that we transport from place to place. Anglers may also inadvertently transport them in bait buckets and live wells. Other things that move between waters, including waterfowl and sea planes, also have the ability to carry "hitchhikers". Once introduced, some species can even be able to move without our help - fish can swim into adjoining waters, and plant seeds and fragments may move with the current to new locations.

The good news is that there are prevention steps that we can take when boating, fishing, and otherwise enjoying the water that can help prevent the spread of invasive species. Before taking your boat, sea plane or equipment to a new waterbody:

- Inspect and remove plants, animals, and mud from your boat and equipment;
- Drain all water from your boat's live wells, bilge, motor, etc.;
- Dispose of your unwanted live bait in the trash;
- Wash your boat and equipment with high-pressure or hot water, especially if moored for more than a day; or
- Dry your boat and equipment thoroughly for at least 5 days

*This information is borrowed from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website. For the complete text and other information, see:
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/GLWSP/exotics/>*